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TAGS: PREF PGOV PHUM PREL MOPS CG UG SU CT
SUBJECT: UGANDA: UPDATE ON IMPACT OF LRA ON CIVILIAN POPULATIONS

REF: STATE 118217

¶1. (U) Summary: This report provides recent statistics on the impact of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) activities on civilian populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and Sudan keyed to reftel questions. These statistics are compiled from multiple sources and draw heavily on information provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), which consolidates data from UN partner agencies (e.g., UNHCR, UNICEF, and MONUC) and NGOs. That said, UNOCHA data sets overlap geographically and chronologically, making it difficult to ascertain cumulative numbers and current trends. However, over the past two months, we have noted a significant downward trend in LRA-related attacks and civilian displacements in the DRC and CAR as the LRA moves further north. Except for unfounded fears of an impending copy-cat LRA Christmas massacre, none of the data provided in this cable goes beyond November 2009. End Summary.

LRA Attacks

¶2. How many LRA attacks have occurred during the reporting period?

(U) UNOCHA reports 317 LRA attacks in the DRC from January to November 2009. UN agencies report a consistent reduction of LRA attacks in DRC's Uele provinces. In September 2009, the number of LRA-attack-related deaths (59) hit its highest peak since March 2009, but declined to 21 deaths in November. However, the brutality of these attacks has not diminished; on November 25, LRA rebels burned-alive ten members of a family in a house at Nakwa (12 km south of Bangadi in Haut-Uele).

(U) In Sudan, Western Equatoria State officials reported three purported LRA attacks in Nzara County in November in which seven people were killed and eight abducted.

¶3. How many deaths, casualties, rapes, and abductions due to LRA attacks have been reported?

(U) According to UNOCHA, from December 2007 to November 2009, the LRA killed 1,313 people and abducted 1,052 adults/649 children in Haut-Uele. In Bas-Uele, the LRA killed 96 people and abducted 631 adults and 33 children. UNOCHA also reports that, since the beginning of Operation Lightning Thunder (OLT) in December 2008, 1,229 civilians have been killed by the LRA, 1,515 adults/328 children kidnapped, and more than 330,000 individuals displaced (including 27,000 refugees in southern Sudan and Central African Republic). Because these UNOCHA data sets overlap geographically and chronologically, it is difficult to ascertain cumulative numbers and current trends.

(U) Of the adults abducted, 289 have escaped (60% or 179 of whom are female) and received assistance from Oxfam-Quebec. 80% of the escaped women report having been victims of sexual violence during their captivity. One-half of the escapees are from the Dungu region, 16% from Faradje, 14% from Bangadi, 13% from Doruma, and 7% from Gangala na Bodio (75km east of Dungu).

(U) UNOCHA-Sudan reports that more than 220 people were killed and at least 157 abducted by the LRA in Southern Sudan in 2009. UNOCHA-Sudan estimates that 17,000 refugees fled DRC for Southern Sudan as a result of LRA activities.

(U) UNOCHA in the Central African Republic (CAR) reports that in October 2,184 Congolese refugees fled to Zemio from Ango in Bas-Uele as a result of LRA attacks in Digba, Sukadi, Gwane, Bandundu, Matidi, and Diangadi in the DRC. The number of LRA-affected refugees in CAR is currently 7,000.

¶4. Where have the attacks occurred?

(U) Attacks in 2009 were concentrated in DRC's Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele provinces, and moved progressively westward from the Faradje area toward the Dungu district and onward as the LRA moved into CAR.

¶5. What are estimated numbers of LRA combatants and non-combatants and in what location?

(U) A November 24 article from the UNOCHA news service IRIN quotes a western security analyst in the region as saying that "supply trails" indicate six LRA groups with a total of 500-600 fighters. The report did not specify the location of these groups. On November 22, Uganda Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) spokesperson Lt Col Felix Kulayigye said fewer than 100 LRA fighters remain. Other military sources indicated that 80 LRA fighters are left in the DRC.

(SBU) There appears to be no significant LRA presence remaining in the Faradje area, although there is still a light presence in the Dungu area. A larger group (believed to include some of Kony's family and other close associates) was reported to be near Obo, CAR, and a final, advance group is farther north in CAR heading toward Darfur.

¶6. Have LRA movements been reported? To/from where?

(U) UNOCHA reports that in 2009 the LRA left Garamba National Park

and an initial area of operation around Faradje in DRC and moved toward DRC's Bas-Uele District, CAR, and southern Sudan.

¶7. Are other forces in the area that might be responsible for attacks which are attributed (perhaps wrongly) to the LRA?

(U) A portion of the attacks attributed to the LRA were likely perpetrated by unknown non-LRA bandits or undisciplined FARDC troops, but it is impossible to ascertain additional information. Some attacks were carried out by elements of the LRA who have been cut off from LRA leadership and engaged in foraging attacks for their own survival.

LRA-Affected Populations

¶8. How many internally-displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees have been displaced by LRA and related operations against the LRA since September 2008 (for first report)?

(U) UNOCHA-Province Orientale reports a peak total of 337,100 IDPs during the period of September 2008 to October 2009, and a current total of 265,609 IDPs. UNOCHA also estimates 19,000 refugees in southern Sudan and approximately 7,000 in CAR as result of LRA activities. (NOTE: Many UN IDP figures cover the entirety of Province Orientale, including Ituri District which has approximately 180,000 IDPs; however, only around 40,000 of these IDPs are attributable to LRA attacks, the remaining are the result of other rebel groups operating in the area. END NOTE.)

(U) Through September 2009, the UN recorded returns of 33,821 displaced persons in Haut-Uele, 18,297 in Faradje territory, and 15,524 in Dungu territory in the DRC. Dungu has also seen the spontaneous return of 1,279 Congolese refugees who had fled to southern Sudan because of the LRA.

(U) The UNOCHA News agency IRIN reported on December 21 that the people in Niangara in Haut-Uele District, DRC, fled in response to pamphlets in which the LRA threatened to "celebrate Christmas" in Niangara and Dungu, a reference to the 2008 Christmas massacre in which the LRA killed 865 people and abducted more than 160 children. FARDC representatives stressed that the LRA is incapable in its current form of reproducing this incident. No further information is available at this time on the number of people moving or their intended destination. No LRA-related Christmas incidents occurred in Niangara or Dungu in 2009.

¶9. What is the location of refugee/displaced populations?

(U) In Haut-Uele, DRC, the majority of the IDPs are in Dungu District (52%) with the second major area of displacement around Faradje (30%). Smaller displacements have occurred around Niangara (11%), Rungu (4%), and Watsa (3%).

(U) Of the 58,770 displaced persons in Bas-Uele District, DRC, the largest portion (45%) is from Ango, 27% from Bambesa, 19% from

Poko, 8% from Bondo, and 1% from Buta.

¶10. What is the expected time-line for displaced populations to return home? Have some populations already returned? (Are displaced populations static or moving frequently?)

(U) UNOCHA reported the spontaneous return of approximately 33,000 IDPs/refugees to the Faradje area in October 2009. UN colleagues are otherwise unwilling to forecast a specific return timetable for IDPs/refugees, indicating that it is entirely dependent on neutralization of the LRA and restoration of peace.

Security Response

¶11. What host government actions have been taken against LRA forces? UN (including peacekeeping operations) actions? UPDF? Other (e.g., auto-defense forces?)

(U) OLT/Rudia II was made possible by a coalition forged between and by the governments and militaries of Uganda, DRC, Southern Sudan, and CAR. The detailed actions and operations taken by the coalition against the LRA have been extensively documented in classified reporting by Embassy Kampala and other embassies in the region.

¶12. Have any cross-border coordination efforts taken place between these forces/agencies?

(U) Yes. The militaries of Uganda, Sudan, DRC, and CAR coordinate regularly on actions against the LRA.

¶13. What are the effects on civilians of operations against the LRA? Have there been reports of human rights abuses by security forces responding in LRA-affected areas?

(U) We have received no reports of human rights abuses perpetrated by the UPDF in DRC, CAR or Sudan (reftel 09 KAMPALA 01304 re: comments by U.S. NGO "Enough" on this). There are 6,000 FARDC troops stationed (or in process of being deployed) in Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele. The replacement of the FARDC Republican Guard units with the integrated 93rd Brigade has humanitarian implications. The 93rd comprises a large element of ex-CNDP and ex-Mai-Mai which has raised the specter of internal conflicts within FARDC forces and the possible spillover onto the civilian population. UNOCHA reports that, in November, 37 Congolese child soldiers have been demobilized from FARDC units and have arrived in Province Orientale from the Kivus.

(U) UNOCHA reports that one of the consequences of the change in FARDC personnel may be a reduction in distributions of humanitarian assistance in an attempt to avoid putting the population in danger from unpaid and undisciplined FARDC forces.

(U) Humanitarian agencies report that FARDC is not turning escaped child soldiers over to MONUC's DDRRR Section. In October 2009, the FARDC turned over 10 former child soldiers captured more than two

months earlier.

(U) The local population in Gangala and Bodio also reports that FARDC soldiers are marrying girls under 18 years old. In one school in Nangondi, the teachers indicated that a dozen girls aged 15-17 had dropped out of school as a result of early marriages with FARDC soldiers.

¶14. Has information sharing and coordination by national militaries with the UN been sufficient to allow proactive civilian protection efforts by peacekeepers?

(SBU) MONUC sources have consistently requested greater information-sharing from the UPDF on future operations. They complain that they receive information either at too late a moment to act or after the fact altogether.

¶15. What are future plans for anti-LRA operations and/or civilian protection efforts by these forces/agencies?

(U) As has been noted elsewhere, there are no confirmed reports of human rights abuses, let alone atrocities, committed by the UPDF during the operations against the LRA. The UPDF's ability to protect civilians in LRA affected areas is a function of UPDF resource constraints. However, the UPDF will continue to uphold a high standard of behavior with regard to civilian populations in areas affected by LRA activities.

¶16. Have UN peacekeeping operations effectively conditioned support to national militaries on their respect for human rights, or does such support continue despite reports of human rights abuses by those militaries against civilians?

(SBU) MONUC does not provide support to units of the FARDC accused of credible human rights violations. MONUC does not provide logistical or tactical support to UPDF units because it is not part of the mandate for their operations in DRC.

Humanitarian Response

¶17. Which host-government agencies, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, etc. are responding to humanitarian needs in LRA affected areas?

(U) Caritas D????veloppement, Association for Investigation and Integral Development (AIDER), Commission Dioc????saine Justice et Paix (CDJP), Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), MEDAIR, MercyCorps, M????decins Sans Fronti????res (MSF)-Switzerland, OXFAM-Qu????bec, Social and Economic Development Center (SEDEC), Solidarit????s, T????l????coms Sans Fronti????res (TSF), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP).

(U) NOTE: The attached map provided by UNOCHA highlights the locations and interventions of the organizations above. End Note.

¶18. Please describe humanitarian operations/activities currently underway in support of LRA-affected populations.

(U) WFP (Sitta Kai-Kai, WFP Country Representative, CAR) reports that it is providing food for more than 2,000 displaced civilians in the town of Zemio (1,000km southeast of Bangui).

(U) In Haut-Uele, WFP provides food, MEDAIR and M????decins Sans Fronti????res-Switzerland are working in the healthcare arena, and Solidarit????s is providing non-food items (NFIs) as well as water/sanitation projects.

(U) The International Organization for Migration (IOM) deployed a team on November 19 to begin rehabilitation of the road between Dungu and Doruma. In October, HI/Atlas began rehabilitation work on the road between Mambasa-Mungbere-Gao-Dungu.

(U) During the course of the past several months, a number of NGOs have undertaken assessment missions in the Uele provinces, including Oxfam-Quebec (Bangadi, Bitima, Gangala), CESVI (Gangala), MSF and Caritas (Ango).

(U) UNHCR reports that it has established a permanent presence in Dungu as part of a compound shared with other UN agencies. UNHCR Regional Representative based in Kinshasa reports that the inauguration of this compound has been delayed by inter-fighting among UN agencies about lead roles and "control of the compound"; however, these issues appear to have been resolved.

(U) UNHAS and ECHO are planning to begin flights from other parts of DRC to Dungu 1-2 times/week.

¶19. Please describe coordination of these efforts. E.g., is OCHA coordinating? Host government? Are there regular protection cluster meetings focusing on LRA-affected areas? Is there adequate information sharing among NGOs on the ground, UN peacekeepers and national militaries involved in operations against the LRA?

(U) Coordination is managed via means of sub-clusters (Protection, Health, Education, Water/Sanitation, Food Security) in Dungu town which are under the clusters in Bunia. Primary clusters meet once per month with the exception of the Logistics and Protection clusters, which meet two times/month. In addition a core team focused on the Uele provinces meets weekly as does the security team. UNOCHA also leads a weekly information dissemination/coordination meeting for all UN agencies/partners.

¶20. What are the current humanitarian gaps in LRA-affected areas?

(U) Humanitarian access is most severely limited by logistical challenges. UNOCHA reports that humanitarian actors are currently

unable to undertake missions in Bas-Uele out of Dungu because the NGO flight service operated by Avions Sans Frontières (ASF-Quebec) is out of service.

(U) UN partner NGO Solidarité???'s has performed evaluations (Diagbe and Napopo in the area around Bangadi) and determined that there are multi-sectoral gaps in: non-food items, food, water/sanitation, shelter, health, and education among both the displaced and local populations.

¶21. Have there been attacks on NGOs/humanitarian groups, and if so how has this impacted efforts to respond to humanitarian needs in LRA-affected areas?

(U) On November 27, an LRA attack against a truck transporting seeds for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was reported in Bangadi (Haut-Uele). UNOCHA classified this as the first attack of its kind by the LRA on a humanitarian convoy in DRC.

(U) In October, Dungu civil society organizations distributed a memorandum outlining grievances against MONUC and humanitarian organizations. A meeting called by the territorial administrator to discuss the issues resulted in an exchange of insults. The situation has since calmed; however, several issues remain unresolved.

(U) On October 6, a group of civilians stole NFI kits as well as material for wat/san and water projects from the stock in Aba (Haut-Uele) one hour before a distribution was to take place. This robbery was the result of anger on the part of the local community that wanted to be included in the distribution along with the displaced people. As a result of this incident, Solidarité???'s evacuated its team from Dungu on October 7 and suspended all wat/san and NFI programs in Aba and Kurukwata zones until further notice. (NOTE: no further information on whether they have resumed services. UNOCHA continues to identify Solidarité???'s as NFI distributor in Aba. END NOTE.)

Other

¶22. Please report on any other relevant developments/concerns related to the LRA not covered above.

(U) There is a plethora of information on the LRA and LRA-affected areas available, both open and restricted source. For more detailed reporting on UN agency activities and information gathering on the LRA and LRA-Affected populations:

???? UNOCHA DRC Website: <http://www.rdc-humanitaire.net>

???? Embassy Kampala: hibbardjr@state.gov

???? Department of State Humanitarian Information Unit:
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